# Immigration Policing & Border Violence

> On September 3, 1993, Juanita Gomez and her female cousin crossed the border between Nogales, Sonora, and Nogales, Arizona to meet two male friends to go shopping. Larry Selders, a Border Patrol Agent, stopped all four people, but only detained Gomez and her cousin. Selders then told Gomez and her cousin that he would not take them to the Border Patrol department for deportation if they would have sex with him; after both women refused, he raped Gomez.

Law enforcement violence against immigrant women and trans people — including sexual abuse — is enabled by U.S. immigration policy. The U.S. government's strategy of militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, and anti-immigrant interior enforcement through the use of raids, expansion of immigration detention facilities, and collaboration between federal immigration enforcement and local police agencies creates an environment where immigrant women are vulnerable to violence and sexual assault.

## Violence at the border

Violence against migrant women at the border is not random or isolated: as representatives of the UN Development Fund for Women report, at least 60 to 70% of undocumented women migrants who cross the border alone experience sexual abuse. The danger is even greater for migrants from Central American countries, who must pass through two militarized borders—between Guatemala and Mexico and between Mexico and the U.S. Sexual violence often occurs while being robbed, as "payment," or in exchange for not being apprehended or detained by immigration authorities.

## Immigration raids & local police as immigration police

Immigration law enforcement officials have conducted raids at schools, shopping centers, and workplaces, sweeping the area for undocumented immigrants. In addition, the federal government has begun to deputize local law enforcement agencies to act as immigration agents. The increasing presence of immigration law enforcement lead women of color to see law enforcement agents and the criminal legal system as further threats to their safety.

## Violence in immigrant detention

The immigration detention system is the fastest-growing incarceration program in the country, leading the rapid expansion of the prison-industrial complex in the U.S. In 2005, the Department of Homeland Security detained 237,667 individuals: an average of 19,619 per day.

Christina Madraso, a trans woman, sought asylum in the U.S. after being badly beaten for her gender identity in Mexico. However, her nightmare began when she was detained in the Krome Service Processing Center, where she was placed in the men's ward, and faced harassment by guards and other detainees. She was then transferred into an isolation unit, where she was then sexually assaulted twice by the same guard. After the second rape, INS officials told her that she could either transfer to a mental institution, county prison, or give up her asylum claim.

Download full fact sheet on immigration policing & border violence **(PDF)**

## Stop Law Enforcement Violence

Why a Project on Law Enforcement Violence?

“Quality of Life” Policing

Disaster & Law Enforcement Violence

Immigration Policing & Border Violence

Khaki and Blue: A Killer Combination

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Participatory Action Research

Policing Gender

Policing Native Women & Native Two Spirit and Trans People

Policing Sex Work

Stop Law Enforcement Violence Toolkit

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